

# Ways to Generate Main Points/Counterpoints and Ways Organize your Research Paper



# Remember that...

- Since you are writing a longer paper with the purpose of persuading your reader, you need to make sure you organize your paper in the most logical and practical way.
- Along with three or four main points to support your thesis, you must also have a counterargument to your thesis to show that you are a reasonable person who will at least acknowledge what “the other side” has to say (remember this from Rogerian Argument??).
- Well then, how should you find and choose the best points to support your thesis and how do you decide which counterargument to use and then refute? Go to the next slide to learn about a useful strategy.

# The Pro/Con Activity

Turn your topic into a question and add two columns to respond to that question. Let's use the following question as an example:

Should homeschooled students be allowed to participate in varsity sports?

## YES/PRO REASONS

1. Homeschooled parents pay taxes for public education programs
2. Gives homeschooled students opportunity to socialize with peers
3. Adds uniqueness to team, thereby promoting diversity
4. Allows for opportunity to bring in more talent outside of current high school students

## NO/CON REASONS

1. Takes away varsity spots from "true" high school students
2. Lack of cohesion to have players who don't have school spirit
3. Homeschooled students could be bullied
4. Communication issues since homeschooled students don't attend school

# Next...

- Now it is time to decide **which side** you would like to argue. Whichever side you choose, you already have your four main points that should make up the main claims of your body paragraphs. Of course you will need to find researched, published evidence, testimonials, anecdotes, and statistics to back up these main points.
- Also, you have a bunch of counterarguments since you provided answers for *both* sides of the issue. It's best to choose only one or two of the points on the opposite side to acknowledge and then refute. Choose wisely!

Let's say you choose the Con/No side to the question. Now you can eliminate the other side's points, keeping two to use as counterarguments:

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# Now you can see that...

We have our argument outlined—that homeschooled students should *not* be allowed to participate in varsity sports because :

1. Takes away varsity spots from “true” high school students
2. Lack of cohesion to have players who don’t have school spirit
3. Homeschooled students could be bullied
4. Communication issues since homeschooled students don’t attend school

AND, our counterarguments are:

1. Homeschooled parents pay taxes for public education programs
2. Gives homeschooled students opportunity to socialize with peers

# Great, you say, but how should I organize these points and counterpoints?

Here is one way: (Imagine each numbered item as a paragraph→)

1. Introduction to subject and your thesis on the subject
2. Summary of subject's background and of subject's current state in society
3. First point about subject (with evidence, examples, reasons) that proves thesis
4. Second point about subject (with evidence, examples, reasons) that proves thesis
5. Third point about subject (with evidence, examples, reasons) that proves thesis
6. Fourth point about subject (with evidence, examples, reasons) that proves thesis
7. Counterargument explained and the refutation of counterargument
8. Conclusion



# And here is another way:

1. Introduction to subject and your thesis on the subject
2. Summary of subject's background and summary of subject's current state in society
3. First counterargument and your refutation
4. First main point (with evidence, examples, reasons) that supports your thesis
5. Second main point (with evidence, examples, reasons) that supports your thesis
6. Third main point (with evidence, examples, reasons) that supports your thesis
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# Keep in mind that...

For both of these organizational strategies, notice that the first body paragraph really should be a summary of what this topic is all about. You will need to explain the topic thoroughly. It will be thorough from your research; you will cite sources, using quotes to explain the issue and include an appropriate amount of background.

Remember: for your essay, you have chosen a topic that some folks know a bit about and some folks know nothing about. So, you need to be writing the summary for the latter audience. You need to clearly and effectively explain the issue before going into why you believe this side of it or this aspect of it or have this type of solution, etc.

## And don't forget the counterarguments:

When you get into the analysis and the main points that promote your thesis, you will need to make sure to have at least a paragraph or two addressing the likely counterarguments to your thesis.

Let's use the following thesis as an example: Clear-cutting of the forests in Oregon needs to stop because it is permanently damaging ecosystems and creating erosion of the once-fertile soil.

One possible counterargument could be that the timber industry is one of the largest in Oregon and without it, the state would continue to add to its bankrupt state.

## And don't forget the counterarguments:

Another counterargument would be that the timber industry is a line of work that keeps small towns in Oregon alive, employing people and adding to the town's vitality.

So, you would need to address these issues by stating their validity but still showing how *your* side/your thesis still trumps these counterarguments. Therefore, while you can certainly acknowledge the validity of a counterpoint, you should also refute that point and prove why your thesis and supporting points have greater heft in the grand scheme of things



**Now it is your turn to try  
the Pro/Con activity**

**Then, start organizing, researching, and writing!**

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